

A Wicken Scrapbook 1897 to 1990

Facts, Features and (occasional) Fallacies
reported in Cambridge Newspapers

summarised by

Mike Petty

Many of these stories were featured in my 'Looking Back' column in the Cambridge News from 1996-2014. They are supplemented by some selections 'From our Old Files' published in the Cambridge Independent Press and other notes.

The complete 'Cambridgeshire Scrapbooks' of which this is a small section is published online at bit.ly/CambsCollection

I have digital and other copies of most of the stories summarised.
I hope to publish these online one day. If you would like them in the meantime then please get in touch.

The original volumes are housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library where there are many other indexes dating back to 1770.

They also have detailed newspaper cuttings files on over 750 topics that have been compiled since the 1960s.

Newspapers sometimes get things wrong. I copy things out incorrectly. Do check

There are a multitude of spelling and layout errors. Please forgive or correct them

News never stops but this file was finished on 31 August 2016.

I will maintain supplements and corrections – contact me for anything you need

Please make what use of these notes that you may. Kindly remember where they came from

See my website – www.mikepetty.org.uk for further notes.

Mike Petty, Stretham

2016

1898 01 28

The Wicken carrier was charged with cruelty to a mare by working it while in an unfit state. Inspector Bartholomew, R.S.P.C.A., said he noticed the defendant at the top of Fore Hill, Ely. He was driving a bay mare in a carrier's cart. When three parts up the hill he stopped, and before he got to the top of the hill he stopped again. When he got to the top he hailed him and he stopped, and the animal stretched, put both legs out, hung his head and appeared exhausted. The animal was in a wretchedly poor condition. He called Mr Thomas Runciman, vet, of Ely who said he found the mare aged and rather poor and small. He, however, did not think the animal was in an unfit state to work. Magistrates dismissed the case

1899 03 09

Wicken Fen is the last fragment of virgin fen. Portions of the fen are often in the market for sale, and the National Trust are desirous of securing a few acres from time to time, so that they may be retained in their primeval state. It is desirable that this piece of the England of long ago should be retained in order that Englishmen of this and future generations may be able to realise what the fenland was.

1900 04 21

Wicken Fen is, it is reported, about to be reclaimed. Enclosed by broad ditches which can only be jumped with the help of a pole, it is overgrown with coarse sedge and sallow-bush. Rare plants and insects lurk in this natural state and makes a happy hunting-ground for the botanist and entomologist. The swallow-tail, perhaps the most beautiful of English butterflies, still lingers, though not nearly so common as formerly when it was less hunted and the food plant of its caterpillar grew almost everywhere. During the past 200 years fields have replaced the marshes. On the whole it is a change for the better, yet one space might well be preserved as a survival of the olden time

1900 04 27

Mr W.B. Redfarn writes: "Sir – Can I be of any service in assisting to save Wicken Fen from the proposed drainage and cultivating scheme? I have a summer residence in Waterbeach Fen and am therefore frequently in the immediate neighbourhood of this charming and interesting bit of ancient fenland. I am sure there would be a deep feeling of regret, among all classes, if this last bit of the English Fens were "reclaimed", and as the land would not be of much value even when under cultivation, its present value cannot be very great". The absolute safety of the fen will never be assured until the whole of it has been acquired by the National Trust, or by private persons determined to save it.

1900 05 02

The report that Wicken Fen was about to be drained does not appear to have been well founded. The fen is held in plots by a considerable number of owners and there can be no drainage unless all the owners give their consent. The South Level Commissioners have the right to flood the fen at any time it should seem good to them to do so. Thus they can prevent the land being turned into profitable agricultural uses. The National Trust owns a strip about two acres in extent. In order that it should be permanently secured against mere commercial enterprise it must be acquired on behalf of all the public and it is clear the best thing would be that it should pass into the hands of the National Trust

1900 05 10

Messrs Gain, Moyes & Wisbey offered for sale by auction two acres of land at Wicken fen described as the only virgin fenland in England. It was valuable in consequence of the rare insects and birds and should receive the attention of any ornithologist or naturalist. The bidding reached £17.10s. at which price Mr George Verrall, president of the Entomological Society became its owner. The next lot, a similar piece in St Edmund's Fen was purchased for the Hon. Nathaniel Rothschild. The freehold licensed premises, the White Hart beerhouse, situate on heath Road, Swaffham Prior was withdrawn.

1900 07 11

Newmarket RDC received a petition calling for an inquiry into the proceedings of Wicken parish council. A clerk had been appointed who holds the post of assistant overseer and district councillor at a salary of £30 a year. He had since obtained the office of sub-surveyor for his son, a boy of 17, with no qualifications for the post, the work having since his appointment been executed by the District Councillor himself. This appointment was made in the face of a strong recommendation by the inhabitants in favour of a man well

1901 02 20

An Epson woman told the court she had entered service as upper housemaid to the Vicar of Wicken and the agreement was that she should receive £24 a year. She was turned out of her situation. No reason was given for sending her away. She was paid no wages and told she would have none. The Vicar said she had declined to do what was asked, which was to fetch coal. His Honour said that even if there was impudence, there must be a month's notice given & gave judgement for the plaintiff.

1904 03 26

Two Saffron Walden labourers were summonsed for being on land in search of game. PC Field said he was on duty near the Horseshoes, Wicken when he noticed one man's pocket was bulky and on searching found a rabbit on him and catapults on both defendants, together with stones. The rabbit was warm and their boots covered with mud. The men said they were going to Walden fair and picked the rabbit up on the road. They were both fined.

1904 04 15

Wicken Fen has been desolated by a disastrous fire, the worst of many which have played havoc with this, the only piece of primeval fen left in England. It was caused in the same way as the others: a wax vesta, thrown away after use, did not die out and the sedge was set ablaze. Carried by the wind the fire did its deadly work. Between 30 and 40 villagers were quickly at work; after hours of hard toil they succeeded in beating out the fire with branches of trees and the conflagration was stopped at Running Water. Two gentlemen visitors who had travelled a considerable distance to search for beetles were the cause of the disaster and have offered to recompense those on whom the loss will fall but the damage to the animal life cannot be replaced.

1904 05 14

Some years ago a Wicken labourer who was remonstrated with by the parson for not sending his son to school, gave as his reason the ignorance of the schoolmaster who "actually taught his son Alf to spell 'taters' with a 'p'!" But in Fitzroy Street Cambridge we have a 'Shrit' maker (presumably a maker of shirts) and find 'fresh fish on sail every day'. A shoemaker announces that boots are sold and heeled at reasonable prices' and nearby there is a 'wheelbarrow for sale'. Not far removed one can read that 'Horehound Bear' is on sale.

1905 01 05

For the last three days the thermometer has been registering eleven degrees of frost; should it hold the professional skating race open to all the world for the Littleport Fifty Guineas Challenge Cup will take place. It is imperative that skaters all over the country should receive due notice; once the amateur champion, W. Housden of Wicken Fen, did not hear and was unable to defend his title. There is already a fine sheet of ice on Lingay Fen but it is doubtful if the public will be allowed on it for a few days. Sheets of ice promise to be ready for use at Newnham shortly

1906 05 19

Wicken School, p3

1906 06 11

Funeral James Day, Wicken

1907 07 19

Wicken suicide George Howlett – 07 07 19

1908 07 31

Cambridgeshire County Council have purchased a farm at Milton by auction and arranged to hire land at Guilden Morden and Isleham for use as smallholdings. They have also been offered 166 acres at Herod's Farm Foxton for £3,500. Petitions have been received from applicants urging the early acquisition of land in Over and Wicken. CWN 08 07 31

1909 10 21

An inquiry into County Council plans to acquire land for smallholdings at Thornhall Farm on the Upware Road, Wicken was told they needed 300 acres of land and this was suitable. They had opened negotiations but the trustees were not willing to let it for more than eight years so they'd decided on compulsory purchase. Since then the land had been leased by Robert Fuller and Henry Bailey for a period of ten years. It was so mixed up with the Spinney Estates that it would be hard to separate it. CDN 09 10 21

1910 05 06

Under the new Midwives Act no woman can habitually attend women in childbirth unless she is certified. There were 54 midwives on the register of whom 30 were trained. Ten of the untrained women were between the ages of 65-75 and might need replacing before long by reason of death or infirmity. There was only one trained midwife at Willingham and an untrained woman at Landbeach. There were none at Isleham, Burwell, Wicken, Upware, Milton, Cottenham, Swavesey or Histon. Some mothers can afford the fee of a medical practitioner but are unable also to pay the full fee of a skilled nurse and so may turn to unregistered women 10 05 06b & c

1911 03 10

Fire broke out at Thorne Hall, Wicken, a farm residence formerly known as Rat Hall about a mile outside the village. Mrs Layton went to the stairs door and could see the bedrooms full of smoke, she sent for help and her husband and other men put out the fire with difficulty. It is an old-fashioned house and the chimneys have much wood in them. The damage is confined to the chimney beams, the floor and to the family washing which was being hung up to dry in front of the fire. 11 03 10d

1911 07 14

Men on John Bailey's farm at Wicken had built up a stack and were about to 'top it out' when two boys (children of a clergyman who was staying in the village) were observed to run away screaming and flames were seen coming from the top. Willing helpers, including the maids and matrons of the village, assisted with water from the wells and Soham brigade did its duty so smartly that they put out the flames using water from the pond on the Green leaving the centre of the stack standing 11 07 14d

1911 08 04

Wicken farmhouse and homestead for sale – 11 08 04f

1912 02 16

G.H. Verrall's will; Wicken Fen left to the National Trust – 12 02 16e

1913 01 03

Complaint about construction of a tunnel to take water from Wicken into Soham Mere 13 01 03b

1913 07 02

Not within living memory have the famous Wicken Fens been so completely flooded as they are at present. The district presents an appearance reminiscent of the Broads, for as far as the eye can see in many directions only the top rails of the fens and the hedgerow tops are visible. It is feared that much damage has been done in this "entomologist's paradise" 13 07 02 p11

1913 03 14

An alarming fire which broke out at Wicken afforded further evidence of the danger of thatched cottages. As the result of a spark from a chimney falling on to a thatched kitchen roof, a house and shop, a detached kitchen and a thatched cottage adjoining were totally destroyed. In view of the high wind it was fortunate the damage was not greater. The fire started at Arthur Bullman's shop where Mrs Bullman was boiling down some fat. Mr Morley Houghton, the postman noticed the flames and raised the alarm. Within minutes there was a large number of helpers on the scene with pails, buckets and baths. 13 03 14 p8 CIP

1913 04 11

Since the recent outbreaks of fire in Wicken a number of people, as an additional safeguard against the fatal spark, have adopted the principle of having the thatched roofs covered with galvanised iron sheets. A number of houses in the village have been treated in this manner including the cottage occupied by Mr David Fuller which, although on the opposite side of the road to the burning shop, took fire owing to ashes being carried by the wind on to the thatch. 13 04 11 p11 CIP

1913 04 18

Wicken bells restored

1913 04 25

Wicken parish council chairman, lively discussion

1913 05

East Cambs bye-election, meetings Burwell, Whittlesford, Ely, Wicken, Soham. Ely, Sawston, Cherry Hinton

1913 05 02

Wicken news of James Rooney now in Ohio USA

1913 05 09 Wicken peat digging. It is to be hoped that the new turf digging season will prove more successful than last year when, owing to the continuous and torrential rain, hundreds of tons of turf were dug and no opportunity was afforded for drying. In fact some of the turf dug in July last is still unfit for burning. A great deal was also lost through the floods in August. It was feared a late start would have to be made this year owing to the rains in the latter part of the winter, but thanks to the high and drying winds, the work was proceeded with and will be continued throughout the summer 13 05 09 p11 CIP

1913 05 30

Wicken new carrier service to Soham

1913 06 13

Wicken Coronation Band photographed by Starr & Rignall

1913 06 27

Wicken funeral scene – burial service not read

1913 08 15

Wicken parish want a railway siding near the bridge in Soham Field - Barway already had one. It was four miles to the station and would be a considerable advantage to farmers. There would be more goods traffic and much that went to Upware would go by rail. Despite recent fires a fire engine was out of the question. But Soham had purchased fire extinguishers which have out a stream of gas instead of water. They might get flames under control and prevent a serious outbreak. It might be possible to buy them by public subscription 13 08 15 p10

1913 08 15

Wicken has received its usual quota of visitors who make an annual holiday in the village. The holiday season usually extends to August and a large number of inhabitants reap a harvest by providing accommodation for them. Many are ardent entomologists and visit Wicken Fen in search of specimens to add to their collections. But the Sedge Fen has had one of its worst seasons and the taking of butterflies and moths have been almost negligible. None of the better class specimens, for which the fen is famous, have been secured. 13 08 15 p11 CIP

1913 09 12

Considerable excitement was caused in Wicken through the bursting of the boiler of a traction engine which was proceeding along the High Street with full thrashing tackle. Many were roused from their slumbers by the noise of escaping steam which rendered the engine helpless. The drum and straw elevator were taken away by horses but the engine was too weighty and another had to be procured. A crowd of children and adults watched the proceedings with interest. 13 09 12 p11 CIP

Wicken proposed railway station sidings proceeding

1913 10 10

Wicken railway siding

1913 10 24

At Wicken Henry Houghton spotted something floating in the river. It was a body wrapped up in a white blanket, nightgown and man's coat. He had not seen it earlier but passing barges may have moved it or it could have floated down the river for miles. The baby girl had been born alive and had lived a month. There was nothing to show whether it died a natural death or was murdered. It was the third time in a month that the body of a young baby has been found in the Cam.

1914 09 04

Recruiting Royston, Shelford, Bourn, Wicken, Soham, Gamlingay

1914 10 09

Newmarket RDC to make and improve road from Cam through Wicken. At one point there was a green track where the whole of the road would be constructed. At Wicken there was another piece of road about eight feet wide where flint would need to be pressed in. Through Wicken the road was a good second class decent road.

1914 11 06

Belgians – Littleport, Burwell, Chatteris, Duxford, Comberton, Sawston, Elsworth, Fen Drayton, Swavesey, Fordham, West Wickham, Wicken, Gamlingay, Willingham, Madingley, Isleham, Landbeach, Linton, Lode, Oakington

1915 09 03

Wicken engineers welcome, little problem billeting

1915 09 17

Stretham whist drive to show appreciation detachment of East Anglian Royal Engineers billeted in parish for last few weeks, several came over from Wicken

1921 10 05

Wicken farmer William Bullman failure – 21 10 05c

1923 05 31

A carter of Wicken was charged with cruelty to a horse by working it in an unfit state at Soham. Inspector Charles Taylor, RSPCA, said he was on duty at the Soham railway approach when he saw the man with a cart containing four fat pigs. The mare attached to the cart was lame. Defendant said the bay mare would not have been brought out but that the other horse was taken bad. P.C. Haines gave evidence that the mare was in pain and her foot was hot. Fined 2s.6d.

1924 09 18

A 14-year old Ely schoolboy was summoned for driving a one-ton motor lorry at Wicken without having a driver's licence (he being too young), and a lorry driver for the American Oil Company was charged with aiding and abetting him. PC Harrison, the Wicken constable stopped the lorry and the man replied, "I only let the boy drive a little way. This will get me the sack". The police considered it a dangerous practice to allow boys to practice driving motor vehicles on the road.

1924 11 10

Cambridgeshire County Council adopted a commendation as to the construction of a bridge at Dimock's Cote. Ald Howard gave a history of what had taken place since September 1914 when the Ministry of Transport promised to pay two-thirds of the cost. In the minds of some people the bridge was not required. But Cambridge would benefit because congestion of traffic in the town would be relieved and in addition they would be opening up a very large area of valuable agricultural country. Coun. Taylor was convinced the idea was absurd. For one thing the road was too twisting for fast traffic. The bridge would need constant renewal and maintenance would cost thousands a year.

1926 07 22

The County Architect reported that a proper set for the foundation piles at Dimock's Cote Bridge on the Stretham to Wicken road was not obtainable at the depth of 40 feet provided in the contract, but by continuous driving a set was obtained at 65 feet. If the whole of the 38 piles had to be driven to this depth the additional cost would be about £2,500. By driving the piles intermittently there was every reason to believe a set could be obtained at a less depth with many of the piles and the cost would be proportionately reduced.

1926 07 22

The story of how a young Wicken labourer met his death through the sudden discharge of a double-barrelled sporting gun whilst conversing with a civil engineer at the new bridge being erected over the River Cam between Wicken and Stretham was told to the Cambridge coroner. He had told his mother "I think I'll go and have a shoot" on the land of Mr A. Hall who had told him anytime he wanted a couple of rabbits he could have them. The gun was an old type that he had bought off a pal. A surgeon said it was a very difficult case to handle, miles from anywhere; only if medical assistance had been at hand within a few seconds would the case not have been beyond recovery. A verdict of accidental death was recorded

1927 08 29

The season 1927 is likely to be long remembered by agriculture generally. And those recollections will be anything but pleasant. Nor is the weather entirely responsible. Wheat

came up well, but on heavy land we had a bad set in the spring, the land being sodden with wet, and late frost most nights played havoc, from which recovery was impossible. Some fields of spring oats are good but are mostly tangled by adverse weather conditions and difficult to handle. There are some excellent crops of sugar beet but when growers note the profits made by the beet factories and compare it with their own year's accounts one fails to see the justice in the contract price offered – R.L. Fuller, Wicken

1927 09 21

Sir – The other evening I had occasion to be motoring on the Soham-Wicken road. The increasingly heavy traffic has reduced it to such a mess of pot-holes as to prove a nightmare to the driver. Although the car was carefully driven, more than once it was shaken from one side of the road to the other. Someone suggested that the holes would be filled when there were enough bodies to do so. Unless this road is soon repaired I fear many folk will be described like this: “They drove along the Soham-Wicken road, and, behold, when they arose next morning they were all dead corpses” – Much Perturbed

1928 04 05

The official testing of the new bridge over the River Cam at Dimmock's Cote took place. It is 216 feet long and 25 feet wide, constructed of ferrous-concrete throughout and is designed to carry the Ministry of Transport standard loading. This bridge, together with the bridge over the Old West River, completes the road which was constructed in the early years of the war for military purposes and provides direct communication between the Midlands the East Coast, opening up a large area of agricultural land between Stretham and Wicken. It will be open for traffic on April 16th.

1928 04 21

There is one evening in the year which the inhabitants of the little village of Wicken always anticipate with much pleasure. This is the night when Mr Reg Alsop recruits his annual concert party. Long before it was due to begin the hall was well filled and those who could not find seats stood just outside the entrance whilst others had a cheap evening and listened from outside. Mr Alsop had again done his native village well, a fact they were not slow to appreciate. He was in his usual good form and sang ‘Shopping’ and ‘The Good Little Boy’

1928 07 26

Burwell Parish Council called attention to the need of a shorter route between Burwell and Wicken now that Dimock's Cote bridge had been opened to traffic. Although the villages were only two miles apart the present distance by road was 8½ miles. This could be remedied by the hardening of the first droveway and making 30 chains of a new road. It would reduce the distance for all traffic that had to pass via Fordham and Stretham and be a great saving of time and expense to road users which would pay for itself by lessening the mileage of road used

1928 08 24

An important improvement in East Cambs will be effected by the new road which it is proposed should be made from Burwell to the Wicken main road in Heditch Field. It would relieve the main road through Fordham of a considerable amount of traffic and assist an agricultural area. Newmarket R.D.C. has appointed a special committee to deal with the matter

1929 08 16

Wicken Fen sedge fire

1929 08 22

Burwell – Wicken road

1930 02 27

Unparalleled scenes were witnessed in the Mission Hall, Wicken, when disorder at the annual parochial church meeting culminated in loud booing of the Vicar after he had peremptorily adjourned the proceedings. About 100 parishioners were present. The chief cause of demonstration arose from resentment, particularly among the younger residents, against his refusal to allow the use of the hall for dancing and other amusements. The vicar was escorted to his car by a police constable and the parishioners remained excitedly discussing the situation as the caretaker turned out the lights

1931 03 13

The Conservative's touring cinema vans includes talking as well as silent films. There was a crowded attendance at Soham Fen when the programme started with an Empire film, followed by a humorous cartoon showing how the rising tide of unemployment was stemmed by Stanley Baldwin in the guise of a plumber. There were talkies on the agricultural situation and a tour of a motor works together with pictures of the hardships suffered by town dwellers during the General Strike. The van will visit Croxton, Wicken and Chittering. 31 03 13e

1931 10 16

Mr J. Wentworth Day of Wicken Old House acted as mechanic for Sir Malcolm Campbell, holder of the world's motor car speed record, in the practice runs for the 500 miles race at Brooklands. They approached 112 mph but dense clouds of smoke burst from the back and it appeared as though the car would go up in flames. Afterwards he followed the final laps in a private aeroplane. 31 10 16b

1932 07 08

Wicken Coronation Band played during a fete to raise money for repairs to the village almshouses. There was plenty to amuse with darts, coconut shy, a rifle range and various stalls. Then there was a dancing display by pupils of Miss K. Setchell of Sutton and a variety entertainment by C. Arnold's Concert Party. Mr C. Alsop – known as 'Wick' on account of his activities for the village – said many Cambridge people had made donations. 32 07 08a

1932 09 02

Mr J. Wentworth-Day of Wicken learned journalism on the 'Cambridge Daily News' and wrote the biography of Sir Malcolm Campbell. He recently dined with the Duke and Duchess of York who displayed great interest in the bird sanctuary at Wicken Fen. He also flew in the first aeroplane to land on the tiny island of Sark in the Channel Islands. 32 09 02d

1932 10 07

The old English sport of falconry was demonstrated on Roger Fuller's land at Wicken. Lord Howard de Walden and his friends go hunting with his falcons every year. The five peregrine falcons were brought to the field in an up-to-date motor car and after one or two fruitless efforts finally made a kill out of sight of the spectators. 32 10 07bb

1932 12 23

Mr J. Wentworth Day of Wicken will act as Lady Houston's personal representative on the management of the Houston-Mount Everest flight which is leaving for India in an attempt to fly over the world's highest mountain early in the New Year. The Marquis of Douglas and Clydesdale will act as chief pilot. The crew will have to fly nearly six miles high wearing electrically heated suits and gas masks through which they will breathe pure oxygen. Lady Houston is bearing the entire expense, estimated to cost £15,000. 32 12 23b

1933 06 15

The malaria mosquito is still very prevalent in Wicken Fen, but the disease has died out. During the war, when a large number of troops came home suffering from malaria they were

bitten by mosquitoes which then became infected with the parasite and spread the infection to many people who had never been out of England. This state of affairs lasted for six years but has now died out. Scientists do not fully understand why the insect is no longer infected, the Rotary Club was told. 33 06 15

1933 08 16

Water from four wells at the Pit, Isleham is unfit for drinking and they must be closed. They were probably contaminated from the top and ought to be inspected to see where it came from. Now another nineteen wells will be analysed. Councillors also discussed the bad state of Padney Road Wicken: something ought to be done before the heavy traffic of beet haulage began. 33 08 16

1935 05 31

What is believed to be a medieval burial ground has been revealed by the finding of skeletons during underpinning work at Spinney Abbey, Wicken. The house bears the date 1775 but is believed to be much older and the bodies were found below the wall. Two full-sized skeletons and another of a child were found close together with others nearby. The position of the bodies indicates a burial ground, particularly as the house stands on the site of the old monastery which was said to be connected to Denny Abbey by a subterranean passage. 35 05 31 & a

1937 04 23

Wicken wells – 37 04 23b

1937 11 26

The banks on the Reach, Burwell and Wicken Lodes should be raised and the main engine drain widened, the Ouse Catchment Board recommended. At Upware the old scoop wheel, engine and boilers should be sold, the building demolished and a new pump installed. Very few banks had broken in the fens in the last 20 years but those at Soham Lode had broken twice in the last 15 years. Last week the slips were very bad indeed. The County Council were pumping water from Soham Mere Farm into the lode - instead they should pump direct into the Cam 37 11 26 & a

1938 04 25

Electricity would be supplied to Wicken, Hardwick, Barrington, Orwell and possibly Teversham this year. But the Beds, Cambs and Hunts Electricity Company had to abandon a scheme at Fulbourn because of restriction on the overhead line. Telegraph poles had been passing through villages for many years carrying hundreds of wires without undue problems, but as soon as they come along with an overhead line, exception is taken to that. No one liked to spoil nature but it cost double the price to run cables underground bringing the cost per house up from £2 to £5. Six years ago there were 4,615 consumers, now it was 13,145; the number of electric cookers had risen from 526 to 2,039 38 04 25c

1938 07 13a

Wicken Coronation Band have smart, new, bright red uniforms and playing better than ever – 37 07 13a

1939 11 22

Soham firemen want payment for attendance at a fire at Wicken on 4th Sept 1939 – 39 11 22c

1940 03 29

Ouse Catchment Board's huge projects; if pumping station at Upware would need raise banks Reach, Burwell & Wicken lodes – 40 03 29a

1941 09 10

Wicken Native's Appointment -Mr. Stanley J. Granfield, a native of Wicken, has recently been appointed acting headmaster of Chesterton Senior School, Cambridge, while the Headmaster (Mr. G. W. Mansfield) is away on military service. Mr. Granfield will be remembered in the village for his activities in connection with the Tit-Bits Concert Party, the East Cambs. Motor Club and Fordham Rodeo. Gaining a scholarship at the local Council school, he was later at Soham Grammar School and the University of London Goldsmiths' College. He has been teaching in Cambridge since 1924.

James Wentworth Day summoned for non-payment of drainage rate on land at Wicken – had bought it as duck shoot and it had been under water ever since – 41 09 10

1941 10 24

Loss to Wicken- — The many friends of Mr. Robert L. Fuller, of Spinney Abbey, Wicken, will learn with regret of the loss he has sustained by the death of his wife who passed away on Saturday at the age of 67 years. The eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Fuller, of Padney Farm, Wicken, she was married to Mr. Robert Fuller at St. Laurence Church, Wicken, on September 16, 1903, and they had lived at Spinney Abbey ever since. Many Cambridge friends had at one time or another enjoyed her kindly hospitality there. Mrs. Fuller was a devoted member of Stretham Parish Church, and took a keen interest in the welfare of the Wicken Almshouses and Nursing Association.

1943 04 07

Eunice Fuller applies for possession of cottage at Wicken from farm worker – 43 04 07a

1944 02 18

Keeper of Wicken Fen.—Mr. and Mrs. G. W. Barnes, of Wicken, were present in the Balfour Library of the University Department of Zoology recently to receive from members of the National Trust Local Committee a presentation marking the completion of 30 years service by Mr. Barnes as Keeper of Wicken Fen. The gift consisted of a handsome black mahogany arched brass dial bracket clock, together with a cheque for £15. The clock bears a silver plate engraved with the inscription: "Presented by Members of the National Trust Local Committee to Mr. G. W. Barnes in recognition of 30 years' service as Keeper of Wicken Fen, 1913-43." The Master of Christ's (chairman of the local committee) made the presentation.

1944 11 17

Awarded the B.E.M.—The King has been pleased to approve the following award in recognition of gallant conduct in carrying out hazardous work in a very brave manner:
B.E.M.—Military Division —No. 13012195 Pte Patrick O'Brien, Pioneer Corps, Wicken, near Ely, Cambs.

1945 02 06

Two aircraft crash in mid air, one fell at Putney Hill Farm near Prickwillow and killed two children – Patricia Legge and Pamela Turner and three others who in bed were injured; - Mrs E. Legge, Mrs G, Howe and Mr R Howe; thought second fell at 'The Bracks' Wicken – 45 02 06a

1946 10 31

Granta singers perform at Wicken church – 46 10 31

1947 06 12

A report by the Bishop of Ely's Advisory Committee on the Care of Churches considered eight churches which were in danger of partial collapse. Typical examples are the fine medieval towers of Soham and Orwell, the interesting chancel of Hatley St George, the roof of Caxton and almost the whole church of Wicken, which is splitting in half.. There were also

a large number of churches where considerable repair was needed now to prevent serious decay later. Some of the failures could be attributed to soil subsidence or rough weather, but for the most part were due to the accumulation of repairs postponed because of the war

1952 05 20

When Reach fair was proclaimed by the Mayor of Cambridge (Ald. H.O. Lagdon) on Monday schoolchildren from Wicken and Upware revived the aged custom of arriving in a barge on the Reach Lode. Rigged with sails the boat had been navigated from Upware. It is many years since anyone set sail for Reach fair but some of the children say they have heard their parents talk of having made the same journey. The boat was moored in the Hythe where it formed part of the background for the proclamation by the Town Clerk of Cambridge (Mr Alan Swift

1953 07 17

The Minister of Agriculture was asked In Parliament why Adventurers Fen in Burwell, which was derequisitioned last year, is to be handed back to the National Trust in view of their expressed intention to flood it. How much public money has been spent by the Agricultural Executive Committee and how did he justify making derelict good agricultural land by flooding? He replied that the research work done at Wicken was enormously important. The National Trust land covered about 280 acres and only 120 acres of the poorest and wettest land would be flooded

1954 04 23

Three Wicken almshouses in a good state of repair have been allowed to remain empty because of the provisions of a Trust. One house has stood empty for 18 months and the other two a year. They are available to widows or single women aged 60 or over and are each endowed with an annual sum of £20; the occupants also receive 2s.6d. But they must be regular communicants of the Church of England. The Vicar has done his utmost to get the houses occupied and says if the Charity Commissioners would omit the clause about communicants or allow a man and his wife to have them they could be filled within a week.

1960 07 08

Duke of Edinburgh visits Wicken Fen 60 07 08

1960 10 21

In the isolated Fenland village of Wicken, on a cold October night, the windows of the Hall were almost the only glow within sight, the record-player the only sound. Thursday nights, Youth Club nights, are looked forward to with enthusiasm. Powerful motor cycles stood parked in the dark outside, their owners playing table tennis and miniature billiards. There was a darts board, a stove, a canteen hatch and a very few girls sitting in a group. The record player standing on the platform at the end of the room was playing 'pop' songs. The club leader, a man in slacks and pullover, with a whistle on a cord round his neck, said it had 21 members, only four of whom were girls. 60 10 21

1962 02 23

Sir – I admire the paintings of Edward Vulliamy and hope there may be an exhibition of his work. I have two examples of his genius. One, dated 1929-31, is a superb watercolour of a drainage windmill that stood near Wicken Fen, the other is a pencil sketch of the windmill on Madingley Hill. They hang alongside other fenland etchings – R.W. Macbeth's 'Fen Flood', 'Potato Harvest in the Fens' and Robert Farren's 'Holywell' and 'Sunrise on Wicken Lode'. I hope I shall find somewhere that Cambridge people may enjoy them as I have done – William Farren, Milton Road, Cambridge. 62 02 23f & 24

1961 12 07

Reed and sedge plants grow wild in Wicken Fen. Reed needs to be cut annually in the depth of winter while sedge is normally harvested in the spring. In the past, cutting was done

entirely by hand, the reeds being tied in bundles a yard in circumference and carried three at a time to the lode-side. There it was loaded into a flat-bottomed barge and pulled by 'one donkey power' to the stacking site to await sale. Today the donkey has been replaced by an outboard motor and the actual cutting is done mechanically with a tractor and Allen scythe. One may regret the passing of picturesque methods of the past, but they were very hard work and economically unrewarding 61 12 07d

1963 01 18

Wicken Fen peat digging industry – history and picture of Sennitt by W.M. Lane – 63 01 18a

1965 01 07

Hawes farm, Padney near Wicken has startling results with new variety of potato – 65 01 07d

1965 01 15

Wicken village photo feature – 65 01 15f

1965 06 29

Wicken Fen museum treasures saved from fire – 65 06 29

1966 04 04

Wicken Fen reeds in demand for thatching – 66 04 04a

1976 11 09

Wicken's eldest resident, Mr Bert Bailey, who has been a regular at the Maid's Head since the middle of the 1890s, is to have his "long service" at the pub recognised by the brewery. When he reaches his 90th birthday on Christmas Day, Watney Mann intends to give him a beer allowance of one free pint a week for the next year. Mr Bailey started drinking at the pub in 1889 – at the age of three – when he was taken by his father. He became a regular at the age of nine after leaving school. In those days beer was 2d a pint, but he was only paid 6d a day for working on a farm at Padney. He has averaged two pints a day and says this has kept him in good health.

1978 04 07

A growing number of rampaging foxes are causing havoc among the hens and ducks of the area around Wicken Fen, but the warden doubts the foxes are breeding on the fen. Farmer Stephen Beckett of Isleham said: "Four or five years ago we didn't know what a fox was around here. But now we've got them all over the area. Six weeks ago my brother saw a group of three on his land". The secretary of the Naturalists' Trust said the fox population had gone up very markedly, but so has the rabbit population which causes more damage. Elsewhere huntsmen are complaining of a shortage because of a demand for red fox fur by the fashion industry. An uncured pelt can fetch £18 before the furrier and fashion house begin to mark up the price of the finished article.

1982 06 16

'Fenland Suite', the first work ever specially composed for organ solo and brass band, was recorded by the Cambridge Co-op Band with its composer, Dr Arthur Wills on the Ely Cathedral organ. Enthusiasm for the piece and the occasion was obvious, "I like that bit, even though I wrote it myself", said Dr Wills during the play-back of the 'Wicken Fen' movement. 82 06 16

1983 07 25

The Maid's Head, 16th century pub at Wicken, was badly damaged when fire tore through its thatched roof. The landlord, Alan Goldson, was three-quarters of the way through a renovation project with a new cellar and kitchen due to be completed this week. It is believed

to have been started by a flame torch being used by a builder putting tarmac on the roof of the new cellar. 83 07 25 p1

1984 05 23

Two faded photographs in the smart office suite at Ivor Searle's Soham premises keep alive the memory of the founder of the firm and the little wooden-fronted workshop at Wicken where it all began just after the war. After starting an engine servicing business Ivor died in 1956, leaving his wife and two small sons. Their mother managed to keep the firm idling gently until the boys were old enough to take over. Now they have moved to new workshops and are among the top 20 engine reconditioners in East Anglia. 84 05 23 p20

1985 07 02

Thirty former Land Army girls travelled from all parts of the country for a unique get-together at Swaffham Prior House where they stayed during the Second World War. Joan Thomas remembered her attic room in the early 17th-century house while Betty Canham of Wicken recalled getting up at six in the morning. The reunion was sparked by a list of Land Army rules which were pasted to one of the attic rooms and discovered by the Marshall family when they moved there two years ago. The organiser Joan Bradley said she was overwhelmed to see everybody after all that time. 85 07 02a

1986 04 23

Blackie Children's Books will be publishing a new title, 'Happy Birthday Topsy and Tim' to mark the 25th anniversary of the stories written by Jean Adamson. She insists on a surprising amount of research before writing each new title. The latest, involving horse riding, resulted in the visit to a riding school near Mildenhall where she took dozens of photographs as an aid to memory. Jean and her late husband Gareth set up home in Wicken nearly 20 years ago and her daughter Gabrielle has helped with a number of new titles. The first series is being reissued with modern illustrations to keep it abreast with the times 86 04 23a

1987 04 15

Reginald 'Wick' Alsop, OBE, President of the Cambridgeshire 99 Rowing Club, has died aged 92. So-named after the village of Wicken where he grew up, he dedicated his life to rowing. He joined the 99 club in 1921 and was club secretary, then President. He was a familiar character around Cambridge well-known for the fresh carnation he always wore in his button hole. Wick was associated with many institutions and charities and was awarded his OBE for services to the community 87 04 15

1987 07 17

Broadcaster John Timpson officially opened a project designed to help the disabled enjoy the National Trust's Wicken Fen nature reserve. A community work team had spent the past year building a wooden boardwalk so that wheelchair-bound people and children in pushchairs can have access to the fen, which is waterlogged for most of the year. The route, which is supported on piles driven deep into the peat, takes them past different habitats including woodland, sedge and hay fields. 87 07 17

1987 07 30

The tumble-down windmill at Wicken is being restored to its former glory thanks to a group of dedicated enthusiasts. They have sunk thousands of pounds into a six-year project to bring it back to working condition. First they must rebuild the three wooden floors which have been eaten away by woodworm and dry rot. The mill was worked by sails until the late 1930's when they were considered dangerous but much of the original machinery is still in place. A new aluminium cap was put on in 1971 by Chris Wilson, the owner of Over mill who is assisting with the project 87 07 30a

1987 12 11

Anthony Day was born into a farming faming in the fenland village of Wicken only yards away from his present cottage 65 years ago. As a youth he tried farming and after completing war service was accepted into the Cambridge School of Art, then studying at Reading University. He took various jobs to help him survive as an artist, shifting scenery at the Arts Theatre and taking evening classes but would go out on his motor cycle on painting expeditions into the fens. They provided him with an endless source of new material and now his pictures are fetching prices in the region of £300. They can be seen on the walls of many houses in the area 87 12 11

1988 03 15

The National Trust's Wicken Fen reserve wanted a new pool for wildfowl but the peat kept turning to mud when dug. So soldiers from 39 Engineer Regiment at Waterbeach set off three controlled explosions as a training exercise. When they had finished a TV crew asked them to do just one more, for the cameras. They obliged, so the Trust ended up with a hole much deeper than expected. The pool, about 20 metres square, will be home for moorhen, coot, fen dragonflies and freshwater plants. A hide adapted for wheelchairs will overlook it. 88 03 15

1988 05 16

Plans to close Wicken primary school have been rejected by county councillors after recently-elected Albert Lawrence persuaded them to let it stay open. It has only two classrooms and a falling number of pupils, which stands at 53. The hall is in a bad state of repair and will have to be closed in July. But unless more houses are built, the school cannot be sustained. Pupils would then transfer to Soham Church of England school though hopes of rebuilding there have been delayed by Government red tape. 88 05 16a

1990 07 26

Wicken memories of Anthony Day – 90 07 26b

1990 08 13

Land between Stretham and Wicken flooded by Shropshire's to drown eelworms – 90 08 13a

1990 10 08

Wicken Fen opens no.5 Lode Lane – 90 10 08c